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YUGOSLAVIA: At yesterday's expanded session the party presidium cut the number of republic representatives on the party executive bureau in half and agreed to make some key, but unspecified, personnel changes in the remaining slots.

The move appears to downgrade the executive bureau in relationship to the presidium. Heeding Tito's call Saturday for an immediate reorganization of the party's top organs, presidium member Veljko Vlahovic wasted no time in outlining a new executive bureau made up of one representative (formerly there were two) from each of Yugoslavia's six republics and one each from the two provinces. The new bureau will "not include what we call older comrades," Vlahovic asserted, but will be "composed of younger officials."

The emphasis on youth appears to block the return of old-time hard-liners and buttress official claims that the current crackdown does not mean a retreat from Yugoslavia's reform program or a return to orthodox Communism. In contrast to past policies, all eight bureau members are to be assembled "constantly" and will have assigned responsibilities for party matters such as ideological-political work and cadre policy.

The executive bureau was created by Tito less than three years ago. Designed to divide authority equally among the nation's divergent nationalities, and insofar as possible provide a smooth transfer of power once Tito leaves the scene, it proved unwieldy and a platform for nationality bickering.

Available press reports indicate that at a lower level the party will emphasize the development of a disciplined and active cadre. The presidium's decision to pursue this course amounts to an admission by the party that its previously relaxed, behind-the-scenes guidance of Yugoslav political life has been no match for the rapid evolution of regional nationalism, particularly in Croatia. The

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Party is attempting to sell its new program to the workers by declaring they will have a greater role in the party's decision-making process. Workers, nonetheless, will be given the correct slant on national developments through frequent, small party gatherings.

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PANAMA: Evidence is continuing to mount that Lieutenant Colonel Noriega, the Panamanian intelligence chief and the man entrusted with stopping the narcotics traffic that runs through Panama to the US, may be actually protecting this traffic.

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The Torrijos government has reacted sharply to a US intimation that "high-level apathy, ignorance, and/or collusion" may be keeping Panama from paying sufficient attention to narcotics enforcement. Rather than stepping up enforcement or correcting deficiencies, the government has instead taken the diplomatic offensive. The Foreign Ministry delivered a stiff protest to the US earlier this month and subsequently publicized it. The foreign minister went on to allege that charges of official Panamanian involvement in narcotics trade were fabricated in an attempt to upset the canal negotiations. This reaction makes it unlikely that the government will remove Noriega or take any other step that might lend credibility to such charges.

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